

Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6908

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 16635

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: PRESS STORY ALLEGING SOVIETS DO NOT EXPECT SALT
AGREEMENT BEFORE 25TH CONGRESS

1. POLITICAL COUNSELOR NOVEMBER 18 ASKED WASHINGTON
POST CORRESPONDENT PETER OSNOS FOR BACKGROUND OF
STORY WHICH APPEARED UNDER HIS BYLINE SEVERAL DAYS
AGO IN HERALD TRIBUNE CITING SOVIET SOURCES AS
SAYING THAT THERE WAS LITTLE HOPE FOR SALT AGREEMENT
OR BREZHNEV WASHINGTON SUMMIT BEFORE 25TH CPSU
CONGRESS IN FEBRUARY. OSNOS SAID HIS SOURCE FOR
STORY HAS EXCELLENT CONTACTS IN CENTRAL COMMITTEE
APPARATUS AND THAT HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY CENTRAL
COMMITTEE ON THIS SUBJECT. IT WAS OSNOS' ASSUMPTION
THEREFORE, THAT THIS WAS GENUINE CURRENT SOVIET
ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION. OSNOS ALSO SAID THIS IN-
FORMATION WAS PASSED ON TO HIM BEFORE SECRETARY'S
PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS CRITICIZING LATEST SOVIET
RESPONSE ON SALT.

2. OSNOS ASSUMES THAT THIS WAS CLEARLY BEING PASSED
ON TO HIM FOR BARGAINING PURPOSES. SOVIETS, HE SAID,
WERE CONVEYING MESSAGE THAT WHILE THEY WOULD VERY
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MUCH LIKE TO SEE SALT AGREEMENT AND WASHINGTON SUMMIT

IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THEY WERE FAIRLY RELAXED ABOUT THIS AND WOULD NOT BE HURRIED INTO AN UNSATISFACTORY AGREEMENT. OSNOS ENVINCED ANNOYANCE AT STATEMENT CARRIED IN SAME ARTICLE THAT POSTPONEMENT OF SALT SETTLEMENT WOULD IN EFFECT MEAN NO SALT AGREEMENT UNTIL 1977 BECAUSE UPCOMING U.S. ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD INTERFERE WITH NEFOTIATING PROCESS. OSNOS STRESSED THAT SOVIET SOURCE MADE NO SUCH STATEMENT AND THAT THIS WAS ADDED BY WASHINGTON POST EDITORS. OSNOS SAID THAT HE HAS CONTRARY IMPRESSION THAT MOSCOW BELIEVES SALT AGREEMENT WOULD STILL BE POSSIBLE TO NEGOTIATE DESPITE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

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